

# COMMUNIQUÉ

28 September 2021

The Children and Families Tripartite Forum (the Forum) held its third meeting of 2021 in Darwin.

The Forum was chaired by Ms Donna Ah Chee, who welcomed members and observers from the Northern Territory and Australian Governments, Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS), North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT).

The meeting began with a Welcome to Country from Larrakia Elder, Dr Christine Fejo-King who reflected on the important work that the Tripartite Forum is undertaking for children and families in the Northern Territory.

The meeting hosted Northern Territory Ministers:

- The Honourable Lauren Moss MLA, Northern Territory Minister for Children, Minister for Youth, Minister for Education, Minister for Seniors, Minister for Women who attended in person and was supported by Mr Mark Monaghan MLA, Assistant Minister for Education;
- The Honourable Kate Worden MLA, Northern Territory Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing, Minister for Disabilities, Minister for Sport, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, who attended via telephone from Tennant Creek

The Honourable Michelle Landry MP, Federal Assistant Minister for Children and Families sent her apologies but sent a written a statement that was noted by the Forum. The Honourable Ken Wyatt AM MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians also sent his apologies

Minister Moss reflected on the pleasing improvement in the recent NAPLAN results, discussed the investments being made through the Child and Family Community Fund and the upcoming release of the 2021 Story of Our Children and Young People. The Forum discussed the importance of the work being undertaken for the Education Engagement Strategy and how vital the retention of teachers is to children's learning and engagement.

Minister Worden provided an update on the status of the Single Act for Children, informing the Forum that the NT Government had considered the introduction of the Single Act and decided not to proceed. She outlined that there would be a continuing program of law reform and identified the intended changes to the *Care and Protection of Children Act*. The Forum congratulated the Minister on her commitment to the family and domestic violence training available on the risk assessment tool and discussed the benefits of consistent workforce training across sectors.

The Tripartite Forum's Generational Strategy Working Group reported on the development of the 10-Year Generational Strategy (Generational Strategy) for Children and Families in the Northern Territory. The Forum heard from Ms Donna Hunter and Mr Kim Mulholland from the Aboriginal Expert Advisory Group including their priorities for the Strategy. Forum members congratulated the Working Group on the progress of the draft Generational Strategy and endorsed its public release on Have You Say for further consultation.

The Forum were provided an update on the new child protection and youth justice information system by Chris Hosking from the NT Department of Corporate and Digital Development. They noted the development of the new system and asked the NT Government to consider and provide further advice on the data governance, including Aboriginal data governance.

Karen Weston, Chief Executive Officer of the NT Department of Education provided an update on the draft Education Engagement Strategy and the extensive consultation process. The Forum discussed the importance of language in education, particularly bi-lingual education, and requested that it be further emphasised in the Strategy.

The Department of Social Services, National Disability Insurance Agency and the NT Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities provided an update on the uptake and utilisation of the NDIS in the Northern Territory including for children in care and youth detention. The Forum noted the increase in uptake in the Northern Territory and plans of the Australian and Northern Territory Government to improve Territorians' with disabilities access to support. The forum agreed to further consider how members could support increased uptake and utilisation of Early Childhood Early Intervention plans across the Territory.

NT Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities provided an update on law reform, including changes to the Care and Protection of Children Act and the challenges involved implementing a Single Act for Children. The Forum discussed the possibility of still achieving the aspirations of a Single Act under the Youth Justice Act and Care and Protection of Children Act.

The Forum considered the quarterly data summary and noted the sustained increase in child protection notifications, continued reduction in the number of children in out of home care and increase to the average daily number of young people in youth detention. The forum also noted the significant increase in assaults involving domestic and family violence through 2020 and into 2021.

The next meeting of the Tripartite Forum will be held in Alice Springs on the 16 November.